

EXHIBITIONS ON THE THEME OF YEARS ENDING IN THE NUMBER EIGHT FOR VARIOUS COMMEMORATIONS

This year, we are thinking about and commemorating many jubilees. Some of them we are looking forward to, others still fill us with bitterness and we wish in our hearts that they had never happened. However, the passage of time and events do not know such subtleties. For this reason, it is appropriate to mark these anniversaries, both joyful and sad, some with a clear message, others controversial for some members of society...as part of our collective memory and cultural heritage.

This has opened up space for celebratory inspiration, as well as informative analysis related to society's commemoration. Our leading heritage and art institutions have taken up this inspiration in different ways. Here we will mention three events in Bratislava: the exhibition of the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava castle, the exhibition devoted to the work of Karol Plicka in the headquarters of the Slovak National Museum on Vajanského nábrežie and the exhibition in the Slovak National Gallery which is part of the *Made in Czechoslovakia* project of fine art parallels between Ľudovít Fulla and Emil Filla.

The opening of the exhibition in Bratislava Castle has a celebratory and symbolic character with the participation of the highest government representatives of the Czech and Slovak Republics. The good news is that despite the new statehoods of both countries, there exists the will to cooperate in culture and to evaluate the years of cohabitation – from the period of the preparation and establishment of Czechoslovakia to the end of the coexistence of the countries. The exhibition in the SNM – Museum of History in Bratislava Castle will move to Prague when it finishes, where it will be opened on the day of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in the newly-renovated historical building of the National Museum.

Each thematic topic is carefully chosen and represents a broad spectrum of culture and way of life: from political history to the history of everydayness.

This is how the easy-to-use catalogue is also conceived, which goes with both exhibition presentations of joint history. Thematically, the exhibition starts from important documents leading to the establishment of Czechoslovakia, through the actual days of its foundation as shown in film archives. Furthermore it presents the topics of schooling, ethnic questions, social issues, transport, leisure activities, art in all its genres, memorials, religious life, capitals, the landscape as a natural entity, the armed forces of the state, media and propaganda, the image of Czechoslovakia and opportunities on foreign markets and in foreign policy. All these topics, documented by the chosen artefacts, are unfortunately placed for the majority in narrow booths in the exhibition premises of Bratislava Castle. It is clear that the choice of the items is based on the analytical decision-making and intentions of the curators. However, the way it is put across is limited by the fact that even by the end of June, the items lacked descriptions. The lack of information of the attendants, who are “in the first line” and should have the opportunity – even the obligation – to provide information to curious visitors, surprised me. This comment is certainly not addressed at the people who created the exhibition, but only points out the circumstances of the presentation. We read about educational programmes on offer, but if we do not happen to have children with us, the “educational line of the exhibition, following the traces of Mr. Novák based on extracts from his diary”, escapes us entirely. We do not need to be experts; it is enough for us to be interested in the exhibition, since we spent most of our life in Czechoslovakia. Even then we are often quite confused and do not know why portraits of Hlinka and Husák are hung along the same line. Similar misunderstandings disturb those of us who are looking for our own history and identity in this exhibition. Accidental foreign visitors can understand hardly anything... among other reasons because of the lack of explanatory texts in good English or any other foreign language. It is clear that as Czechoslovaks and fans of museum presentations, we are happy that our life (“*remoska*” cooker, Bakelite telephone and toys) has made its way into a museum, that our memories and those of our parents are being presented. However, a similar “great” anniversary lies in the still-distant future. This is why we regret that such a significant historical and lifetime exhibition has been produced in Bratislava with a lack of visual and documentary care.

The Slovak National Museum approached the exhibition devoted to Karol Plicka as a “sure bet”. Nothing can detract from the beauty of Plicka’s photographs, especially when they are combined with several magnificent authentic collection items from the depositories of the SNM – Ethnographic Museum in Martin, carefully chosen by the experienced curator Dáše Ferklová. Alongside several well-known and often presented photographs, Plicka’s work still hides little known, not “over-exposed” shots of the Slovak countryside, in particular from the photographer’s period in Slovakia in the inter-war years of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Plicka's magnification of beauty, which naturally was not "unblemished" in Slovakia either, but was convincing in the artist's harmonious vision, is conveyed to the visitor at the right time and in the right place. As locals, we also follow the news on the collapsing flooring in the manor-house in Blatnica; in our minds, we search for a guilty party and are happy about all that has been salvaged. In order to reassure public opinion, it is good to mention the importance of the protection of the photographic negatives in the professional conditions of the SNM – Ethnographic Museum's documentation, and that the Blatnica fungi have not put them at risk.

The exhibition is in the right (summer) time located next to the car park of Bratislava's Passenger Port. For groups of holiday tourists in the right place, the headquarters of the SNM provide modern (in the form of congenial photographs) and traditional (ethnographic museum artefacts) beauty. They can enjoy this experience at least as much as a sweet ice-cream on the banks of the Danube...

The guest of honour at the opening of this exhibition was the artist's son, Mr Ivan Plicka. His sharp-witted memories were in stark contrast to the awkward performance by Mrs Helena Jurasovová, who lived up to her reputation as a gushing torrent, but it was not quite clear whether in her flood of words she was bringing us her memories of Karol Plicka or promoting her granddaughter's singing. Next time, it will probably be a safer choice for the organisers to include her singing granddaughter in the programme itself.

As part of its project "*Made in Czechoslovakia*" devoted to the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Slovak National Gallery prepared an exhibition on the work of two classics of Czech and Slovak modern art: Emil Filla (1882 – 1953) and Ľudovít Fulla (1902 – 1980). The exhibition presents their role in the establishment of modern art in our lands. Visitors are made clearly aware of the contexts of the two artists' work: similarities and differences in situations which inspired them to open up the avantgarde trends and ideas from Europe. In the small programme notes, we can read about how Czechoslovak citizens represented the successes and ascendance of both Czech and Slovak art in a wider international context, how they engaged in social life and in art teaching; in the 1950s, they were convicted of formalism, affected by dogmatism and had to deal with the ideologically required method of socialist realism.

The exhibition is organised analytically and tries to answer the many "why?" questions in the work of both artists, in particular in their parallels and contradictions. We were particularly interested in the external socio-cultural circumstances which were defining for their artistic work. Particularly important in the work of both exhibited artists was the question of "Europeanness", or national identity: the national myth, inspired by folk art. The exhibition is well thought-out and shows a thorough preparation through the collected works

from the collections of the Slovak National Gallery, as well as from Czech galleries and private collectors. In relation to this presentation, the printing of a publication (Bajcurová, K. (ed.): Filla Fulla. SNG 2018), a catalogue with exclusive graphics and content, should be praised as a particularly important act.

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